

**ATEL Committee Meeting**  
**Public Utilities Commission**  
**February 12, 2009**  
**9:30 AM**

**Attendees:**

**James Litvack, Pamela Kling, Kat Grygiel, Denise Corson, Laurie Duffy, Laura Peterson, Sean Gill, Tony Manni, Charles Brown and Interpreter Elizabeth Nadolski.**

- 1. Information packets were distributed and introductions made. Minutes reviewed and accepted, after a change to the wording of number 3. - Referring to the Mailbug at not allowing direct communication, to the Mailbug uses email-to-email communication.**
- 2. Denise and Kat stated that after 20 + years ATEL finally has a procedure for ATEL phone disposal. Denise stated that she has catalogued approximately 400 phones, on the FA70 State Property Disposal form. Although the devices have not been picked up, as of yet, we will have an update at our next Meeting.**
- 3. The ATEL Committee voted that they wanted an income qualifier placed on the program in 2006, and in January of 2007 it was instituted with the provision that it would be reviewed annually to see whether the income qualifier should continue. Denise stated at the time when the committee wanted the income qualifier there was a waiting list of around 150 clients and it made sense to give the phones to the people that could not financially afford them; however,**

in the two years since the income qualifier has been put in place the ATEL program has also made changes to the program to make it run more efficiently and currently have no waiting list and plenty of inventory. Denise stated that she would like to suspend the income qualifier on the application: Denise felt that the vast majority of people coming for telephone devices were not financially well off, and that she probably gets only a few people a month that call/send in applications that don't meet the income qualifier; also, the numbers serviced last year by the ATEL program were down by around 50 clients. Denise felt that the income qualifier has turned off some of our referral sources and other clients because they don't want to get in to other people's client financial business. Also, Sean mentioned that he felt the same way when he does marketing with Denise. Kat mentioned she was in agreement with the removal of the income qualifier prior to the news that week that the Governor's Supplemental Budget Bill H 5019 proposes to take some of this year's ATEL funding, which states:

**SECTION 3.** Notwithstanding any provisions of Chapter 1-42 in Title 39 of the Rhode Island General Laws, the Public Utilities Commission shall transfer the sum of three hundred eighty five thousand two hundred forty six dollars (\$385,246) from the Dual Party Phone Relay Fund to the General Fund by June 30, 2009. This fund pays for: (1) A statewide telephone relay service for utilization of the telecommunications network by deaf, hard of hearing and speech impaired persons; (2) The adaptive telephone equipment loan program capable of servicing the needs of persons who are deaf,

hard of hearing, severely speech impaired, or those with neuromuscular impairments for use with a single party telephone line; and (3) A telephone access to the text of newspaper programs to residents who are blind, deaf or blind, visually impaired, or reading impaired with a single party telephone line. This section shall take effect upon passage.

Kat suggested that maybe we shouldn't make a decision on the income qualifier until we know how ATEL funding will be affected. Laura Peterson thought maybe instead of removing the income qualifier altogether, that we could adjust the qualifier to be more liberal. The committee discussed all options and decided that since we have full funding until at least June 30, 2009 and have no waiting list currently, that we would just suspend the income qualifier until the end of the budget year of June 30, 2009. Then the committee would discuss at the next Committee meeting what impact the removal of the income qualifier had on the program, how much funding will be removed from the ATEL program due to the Governor's Supplemental Budget, and whether the income qualifier should continue to be suspended and revisited January 2010. The committee discussed writing letters regarding the potential impact of removing money from the Fund:

Laurie Duffy volunteered to write a letter to the Finance Committee on behalf of the ATEL Committee, James Litvack will write a letter as a consumer, and Denise will write a letter as the Program Coordinator. Denise also said that Tina Thompson would write a letter from the HLAA, and also ask current clients to write letters. The committee

stated that these letters should reference that ATEL services keep people out of Nursing Homes, provide quality of life to people with disabilities, as well as, address safety concerns by allowing individuals to get help in case of an emergency.

4. The Committee reviewed the new ATEL Manuals.

5. Kat discussed that she is in the process of revamping the RICAT Advisory board, and thought the information would also be helpful to the ATEL Committee. Kat, James and Denise met to discuss what type of information would be helpful to the ATEL Committee. Denise put together a manual that included the regulations that created ATEL, ATEL policies, which Denise stated need to be updated, information about the role of advisory committees and a current application packet. Also, Kat stated that future members would receive an orientation prior to their first Committee Meeting, so that new members would have a better understanding of the ATEL Program of the role of an Advisory member.

6. Denise stated that we need to recruit new members, especially in the areas of speech and muscular/mobility disabilities. Also, Heather Taylor resigned as an Advisory Committee Member due to unable to make meetings. Sean Gill was recommended to fill one of the vacancies, and the Committee agreed that he would be a valuable addition. James also suggested Denise draft a letter that could be sent out in PARI, OSCIL and VR mailings that the ATEL Committee is looking for new members.

7. Due to lack of time the committee didn't have much discussion on new devices for the program. However, Denise stated that she had

just met with the DynaVox representative and most of the products they carried were thousands of dollars and not used as a telephone device; however, the Phone IT which cost \$315 and is used to connect the Communication Devices to the telephone, would be a good addition to the program. Kat mentioned that Denise should check with TechACCESS or Meeting Street School to see if they agree.

8. Kat asked if it would be a problem to move the meeting from 9:30, to 8:30 AM or 9 AM; the committee agreed that 9AM would be fine. The date of next meeting: May 28, 2009 from 9AM-11AM. Elizabeth Nadolski agreed to interpret for the next meeting.